



# City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

**Seattle Transportation**  
Grace Crunican, Director

September 8, 2004

*Seattle  
Pedestrian  
Advisory  
Board*

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The Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board shall advise the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the City on matters related to pedestrians and the impacts which actions by the City may have upon the pedestrian environment; and shall have the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of the City's planning processes insofar as they may relate to pedestrian safety and access.

City Council Resolution  
28791

Rob Ketcherside, Chair  
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tiger@zombiezodiac.com

Barbara Gray, AICP  
Right-of-Way Improvement Manual Project Manager  
Seattle Department of Transportation  
700 5th Avenue Suite 3900  
PO Box 34996  
Seattle, WA 98124-4996

Dear Barbara:

The Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board appreciates the opportunity to comment on the preliminary draft of the Transportation Strategic Plan. Overall we are pleased with the plan's emphasis on reducing SOV trips and improving the pedestrian and bicycle environment.

Here are our specific comments on the TSP, offered with the understanding that this is an early draft. If we complain too often that there are not enough specifics, we know that in many cases you are already working on developing them.

## Walking

**W1.2 (Pedestrian pushbuttons):** Pushbuttons make life easier for drivers while inconveniencing pedestrians. Sometimes that's appropriate, as when an arterial traditionally carries far more cars than pedestrians (parts of E Marginal Way come to mind). In general, though, SPAB finds that pushbuttons are used too often, and once a pushbutton is in place, it takes years to get it removed even when pedestrian volumes skyrocket (see Broadway and Union). Therefore, we propose that the city adopt a standard that makes it difficult to install a pushbutton. Furthermore, the "pedestrian recall" mode confuses pedestrians and should be scrapped.

**W1.3 (Access to bus transit):** The improvements detailed in this section should be applied within a 1/4 mile radius of the bus stop, since this is the distance people are generally willing to walk to the bus stop. See also T6.1.

**W1.5 (Pedestrian overpasses):** Overpasses should be ADA compliant and exhibit high-quality design. They should be used only to knit together a fragmented street network and never merely to speed vehicular traffic flow.

**W5 (Complete sidewalk network):** The comp plan stresses the need to prioritize development in urban villages; it's unclear in the TSP whether building sidewalks in urban villages is a higher priority than building sidewalks elsewhere. We believe it should be.

**W9 (Maintain Pedestrian Advisory Board):** We like this one.



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W15 (Accommodate pedestrians during construction): This should be elaborated and broadened to include not only access to “major destinations” but all destinations throughout all types of construction. The city’s own projects are often the biggest sidewalk closure offenders.

Transit

p. 27: A 15 minute headway between buses or trains is a good start, but only a start. Fifteen minutes doesn’t constitute frequent service by SPAB’s standard: 10 minutes does. We urge you to move toward a 10 minute standard for the UVTN, perhaps by adopting the 15 minute standard at the outset but explaining in the TSP that 10 minutes is the ultimate goal. Of course, we understand that many routes in the UVTN already operate on a 10-minute basis (such as Metro Route 7) and that Sound Transit and Monorail will operate with under 10 minute headway at most times.

T1.3: The TSP should say more about how the city should balance the needs of pedestrians with the principles of BRT and express bus. We all want buses to proceed smoothly and reliably down arterials, but getting the urban design features right so those arterials also work well for pedestrians is tricky, and we’d like to see some discussion of this topic in the TSP.

T9: The wording here is unclear, though we support the goal.

Parking

P14: SPAB would like to reiterate that from a pedestrian perspective, there is something special and magical about parallel parking. The best pedestrian neighborhoods in Seattle and everywhere else are festooned with parallel parking. It is the perfect buffer between pedestrians and moving cars: it’s solid, but you can see over it, and because cars are pulling in and out, it forces drivers to slow down. At the same time, I don’t like it when my bus gets stuck in traffic. The city should have leeway to implement parking removal when it’s appropriate, but it should be used very carefully.

Operations and Maintenance

New goal: Echoing W15, we’d like to see the city treat pedestrian obstructions with the same urgency as vehicle obstructions, whether the obstructions are generated by a construction project or a fallen tree.

New goal: Interdepartmental coordination. Both SDOT and SPU do independent plans for sidewalk and drainage improvements on Seattle’s streets. The city should ensure that these two departments develop a unified project list that builds projects and sets priorities based on both transportation and drainage needs.

We hope you find our comments helpful in developing the next draft of the TSP, and we look forward to offering further comments as the document evolves.

Sincerely,

Matthew Amster-Burton  
Vice Chair  
Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board

Robert Ketcherside  
Chair  
Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board